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Ms. Erin M. Sabia is a student in the Doctor of Pharmacy program. She served as a volunteer student coordinator in the 2001-2002 and the 2002-2003 academic year for the “Poison Prevention Programs for Elementary Schools in Buffalo and Erie County New York.” In this capacity, she has been responsible for the implementation and design of the program, the development of materials used in poison prevention programs, and the coordination of programming presented by other professional students in the Doctor of Pharmacy Program.

This project serves to educate children over a wide geographical area including those in underserved areas of Buffalo and Erie county. She, through coordinating a staff of five other students, has demonstrated outstanding leadership and participation in recruitment and training of other colleagues in this program in order to reach students in schools in and around Buffalo and Erie County. For the past six years, the University at Buffalo School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Poison Prevention Program has been reaching out to local school children; teaching them the basics regarding the prevention of accidental household poisonings. It was her efforts that greatly expanded this program during the last academic year and will be adding new dimensions to this program in the current academic year.

Based upon previous years of conducting this program and personal experiences, Ms. Sabia’s first priority was to slightly shift the target age group. Based upon her findings, she and her team elected to target pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade last year and during the current academic year.

Her next step was to expand the program throughout the City of Buffalo and Erie County. Invitations were sent to additional schools in Buffalo, many of which served students in the inner city that had not been exposed to these types of programs. The response from this approach last year was overwhelming with over 56 elementary and pre-schools responding that they wished to participate in this program. This program which included 115 first year professional students in the Pharm.D. program reached over 7,500 local school children in the spring of 2002.

The next step was to educate her colleagues who would be presenting these programs. She coached her colleagues on the format of the presentations which should include what questions and topics to include. At each presentation, the pharmacy students introduce the children to “look-alike” products when unlabeled, can be mistaken for each other, and could lead to serious injury in this age group since few children can read package labels. For each presentation, all of the school children were provided with a letter to take home to their parents, which explained the program, as well as a Household Poison Safety Checklist for the children to

complete with their parents. Each child also receives poison prevention coloring pages and a program completion certificate. Each group of students in the first professional year had given between seven and ten presentations to children at various schools in the City of Buffalo and Erie County.

She continued to lead the changes in the 2002-2003 year's program. Based upon the success of this program, a grant from the office of New York State Attorney General Elliot Spitzer has enabled the program to expand even further. She has worked with other students and the Faculty Advisor, to produce an interactive video/DVD using a commercially available full-scale video production company. This interactive video/DVD would replace live Poison Prevention presentations in remote areas outside of Buffalo and Erie County where it would be difficult for our students to visit given the constraints of their rigorous curriculum. In the current year, a survey of 750-1,000 current first graders (who participated in the program as kindergartners last year), will be conducted to study how much they remember about Poison Prevention six months to a year after they participate in our program. This will provide the basis for further enhancements and improvements in this program in order to better achieve the desired educational outcomes of this outreach program.